

# Serrano language

The **Serrano language** (Serrano: *Maarrênga'twich*) is a language in the Serran branch of the Uto-Aztecán family spoken by the Serrano people of Southern California. The language is closely related to Tongva, Tataviam, Kitanemuk and Vanyume. Serrano has free word order with the only rule being that verbs usually come last.<sup>[3]</sup>

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<b>Serrano</b>	
<b>Native to</b>	United States
<b>Region</b>	Southern California
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Serrano people
<b>Extinct</b>	2002, with the death of Dorothy Ramon
<b>Revival</b>	6 self-identified speakers as of 2009-2018 <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Language family</b>	Uto-Aztecán <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Serran</li> <li>▪ <b>Serrano</b></li> </ul>
<b>Language codes</b>	
<b>ISO 639-3</b>	ser
<b>Glottolog</b>	serr1255 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/serr1255">http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/serr1255</a> ) <sup>[2]</sup>

## Speakers

According to Ethnologue, there was 1 speaker in 1994.<sup>[4]</sup> The last fully fluent speaker was Dorothy Ramon, who died in 2002.<sup>[5]</sup> During the last years of Dorothy Ramon's life, she worked with linguist Eric Elliot. Together they wrote a book named *Wayta' Yawa'* (*Always Believe*). This book was written in Serrano and in English which talks about the Serrano culture and the life of Dorothy Ramon, which in turn saved the Serrano language from complete extinction. After Dorothy Ramon's death, the language is now considered dormant, as revitalization efforts have allowed the language to survive in some form.<sup>[6]</sup>

Traditionally referring to themselves as *Maarrêngayam* meaning "people of *Maarra'*" (*Maarra'* is considered to be modern day Twentynine Palms) or *Yuhaviatam* meaning "people of the pines," the Serrano people originally occupied the area near the Mojave River and San Bernardino Mountains of Southern California. In 1891 the United States established the San Manuel Reservation for the Serrano people where many of its last speakers lived. In 1967, Researcher Kenneth Cushman Hill noted that about 6 people still spoke the now dormant language.<sup>[7]</sup> As of today, the nephew of Dorothy Ramon is seen as the last person who is able to speak the language at a fluent level.



Historical extent of Serrano languages

**See also:** Serrano People

## Language revitalization

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The language was at a time considered to be extinct but there are attempts at reviving it.<sup>[8]</sup> Both at the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians, and Morongo Band of Mission Indians reservations<sup>[9]</sup> there are efforts now underway to teach the language and the history and culture of the Serrano people. Language teacher Pauline Murillo helped develop an interactive CD ROM for learning Serrano.<sup>[9]</sup> As of 2013, apps and games have been developed, and the San Manuel Band's Serrano Language Revitalization Project (SLRP) seeks to develop further multimedia resources for language learners.<sup>[10]</sup> In May 2013, Cal State San Bernardino announced it would offer Serrano language classes to its students.<sup>[6]</sup>

The Limu project offers online courses in Maarrênga' (Morongo Band "Serrano" dialect) and Yuhaviat (San Manuel Band "Serrano" dialect).<sup>[11]</sup>

The Serrano language was traditionally a spoken language; an alphabet was not used until the 1990s. A new alphabet, with 47 letters, including the glottal stop, was developed starting in 2005.<sup>[5]</sup>

The Endangered Languages Project (<http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/1518>) lists Serrano as in the "Awakening" stage, meaning that the language has lost its native and fluent speakers and can be considered "extinct" but has revitalization projects underway to preserve knowledge of the language and the Serrano people.

University of California, Los Angeles provides a recording of a Serrano speaker reading a word list here.<sup>[12]</sup>

## **Morphology**

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Serrano is an agglutinative language, where words use suffix complexes for a variety of purposes with several morphemes strung together.

In 1967, the language of Serrano was charted as having 33 consonants and 9 vowels in its phonetic form.<sup>[7]</sup>

## **Phonology**

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The charts of consonants and vowels below are used in the Serrano language:<sup>[7][13]</sup>

## **Consonants**

		Bilabial	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar		Uvular		Glottal	
						plain	lab.	plain	lab.	plain	lab.
<b>Plosive</b>	<u>voiced</u>	b	d			g					
	<u>voiceless</u>	p	t	t̪		k	kʷ	q	qʷ	?	
<b>Fricative</b>	<u>voiceless</u>	ɸ	s	ʂ	ʃ	x	xʷ	X	Xʷ	h	hʷ
	<u>affricate</u>			tʂ	tʃ						
	<u>voiced</u>	β			ðʒ						
<b>Rhotic</b>			r~r̪								
<b>Nasal</b>		m	n	ɳ	ɳ	ɳ	ɳʷ				
<b>Lateral</b>			l		ɺ						
<b>Sonorant</b>					j		w				

## Vowels

	Front	Central		Back	
		oral	rhotic	oral	rhotic
<b>High</b>	i	ɪ	ɪ~	u	
<b>Mid</b>	e			o	o~
<b>Low</b>		a	ɑ~		

Vowels /ɪ/, /a/, /o/, can be rhoticized as /ɪ~/, /ɑ~/, /o~/.

## References

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- Hill, Kenneth Cushman. "A Grammar of the Serrano Language". *University of California, Los Angeles*. 1967.

## External links

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- [The Limu Project](http://www.limuproject.org/) (<http://www.limuproject.org/>) active language revitalization
- "iLearn Course Portal - iLearn. Serrano Dialects Maarrenga' (Morongo Band "Serrano" dialect); Yuhaviat (Santos Manuel Band "Serrano" dialect)" (<http://ilearn.limuproject.org/iLearn-Course-Portal>). *The Limu Project*. Retrieved 2013-05-08.
- [Dorothy Ramón Learning Center](http://www.dorothyramon.org/) (<http://www.dorothyramon.org/>), Banning, California
- [San Manuel Band of Mission Indians](http://www.sanmanuel-nsn.gov) (<http://www.sanmanuel-nsn.gov>)
- [Morongo Band of Mission Indians](http://www.morongonation.org) (<http://www.morongonation.org>)
- [Serrano language](http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~survey/languages/serrano.php) (<http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~survey/languages/serrano.php>) overview at the [Survey of California and Other Indian Languages](#)
- [OLAC resources in and about the Serrano language](http://www.language-archives.org/language/ser) (<http://www.language-archives.org/language/ser>)

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